

Lee Majors talks show business and his latest film "Matt's Chance"

Focus, a film by Matt Chesin for ASU's Capstone Program



photo courtesy of Matt Chesin

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“Just having a camera and a tripod doesn't make you a storyteller.” ~Brian Kiefling of Madu Productions.



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Strategic partnerships, crowd-funding, borrowed equipment, cast and crew working in exchange for food... Sounds like an independent film set, doesn't it? Well it is, in a way. It's the set of **Focus**: a film by **Matt Chesin** in association with **Madu Productions**. This film is a little more unique, because Matt will receive a grade on it just before his college graduation.

Matt Chesin is a senior at ASU's **Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts - School of Film, Dance and Theatre**. The creation of *Focus* is his capstone project, something that every senior in the program participates in. He could have chosen to write a feature-length film or produce three short films, but like most of his class he decided to direct his own short film. He likes the Director's chair because of the ability to influence and drive every aspect of the film, instead of executing someone else's vision.

Along with Producer Brian Kiefling of Madu Productions, Chesin has been working on this film since June of 2013. The pair estimate they've put about 800 hours into the film, including writing and re-writing the script, planning locations, partnering with local businesses, filming, and they are now in the editing process. The goal is to have the film ready for festival submissions by May 1st.

As with most independent films, countless lessons are learned during the production, and *Focus* is not exempt. (It IS a college project after all!) Chesin has primarily learned the value of networking and building strategic relationships in the business community. As a result of his passion for chronicling the work of first responders, Chesin rode along with some of Mesa and Scottsdale's firefighters, and produced a book of photography from that experience. The relationships built during that time proved beneficial when it was time to shoot a scene with firefighters in full turnout gear.

The team also learned the difficulties of shooting in a remote location: a lack of facilities, the increased complication of meeting dietary restrictions, transporting water for stunts, and in their case especially, managing power consumption on an intense shoot. In fact they had to have one crew member dedicated solely to oversee the generator. The cast and crew are mostly Arizona State University and Scottsdale Community College students and alumni.

Chesin chose ASU's Bachelor of Fine Arts Program in Film and Media Production because he wanted to concentrate on learning roles "above the line" (Actor, Producer, Director, Screenwriter). He wanted to focus on structuring a story. When considering where to attend, he was attracted most to ASU's program because of its strong dedication to storytelling. It's what he feels sets the school apart when other area

programs tend to be more focused on the technology of filmmaking. Chesin and Kiefling have evolved quite a bit over the years based on their involvement in the projects of other students. In fact, most of their learning has been on set, not in the classroom. They've both come to understand how difficult it really is to make a film. As Kiefling put it, "Just having a camera and tripod doesn't make you a storyteller."

Chesin is thankful for the incredible support received from professors and collaborators over the course of this film. Andres Torres and Christopher Bradley have been supportive since the very beginning of framing the story while Janaki Cedanna has provided technical support throughout. Jeff Lynn has been supportive since the beginning in a Developer role. In post production, Chesin has been encouraged by Adam Collis and Chris LaMont. Following graduation, Chesin will be assisting on Kiefling's next project The Locket, along with seeking ongoing camera and production work in the industry.

Focus stars Julia Severance and is the story of a young girl who stumbles upon a camera lens with a mysterious power. Through the lens, the photographer can see into the lives of its past owners, and a new acquaintance becomes a friend in a story that spans two lifetimes. Focus has taken four months to prepare, 3 days to shoot 19 scenes, and almost three months of post production. It will be presented during ASU's Capstone Screening on the Tempe Campus, May 3rd at the Galvin Playhouse. Expect to see as many as 12 student films, and entrance is free. The Playhouse address is **51 E. 10th Street, Tempe AZ 85287**.

More information on Chesin, Kiefling, and the Capstone Screening can be found below:
Matt Chesin: www.mattchesin.com Brian Kiefling: www.maduproductions.com

Capstone Screening: http://theatrefilm.asu.edu/events/features/film_events/capstones.php